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Using translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca to promote an inclusive multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment in Higher Educational Institutions in the UK

Abstract: The multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment and translanguaging has attracted considerable attention lately, challenging the monolingual tradition and the use of English as a medium for instruction in the Global North. The current study employed a mixed-methods approach using classroom observations, focus group discussions, students' pre- and post-tests and anonymous learning journals to explore the impact of translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) on students' writing performance when a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment is used with learners in higher education in the UK. Findings indicated that students overall had a very positive attitude towards translanguaging and ELF in terms of a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment as they facilitated content and language learning and enhanced students' intercultural and multilingual awareness. Moreover, they had a significant impact on students' academic performance. Finally, the article argues that monolingual ideologies should be abandoned due to the increasing drive towards globalization in Higher Education.

Keywords: multilingualism, English as a Lingua Franca, inclusive assessment, translanguaging, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Taking into consideration changes in the linguistic ecology of the UK due to post-war migration (Edwards, 2012), the current chapter explores the use of new strategies which can cater for the needs of the numerous international and local multilingual students since internationalization has increased the numbers of multilingual students in Higher Education (HE) necessitating changes in learning, teaching, and assessment. In allowing multilingual and multicultural learners to retain their identity, we need to explore how universities can promote intercultural awareness and equal opportunities of success and academic

achievement for all learners, celebrating diversity and fostering inclusion and equity. These goals also promote other calls for widening participation, inclusive education, and assessment (DfES, 2003a), community cohesion, every child matters, every language matters (Ofsted, 2008) and learner voice (DfES, 2006), which have been important in the UK context.

Education is increasingly transitioning from monolingualism towards multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; May, 2014) which is defined as the modern tendency of societies, educational institutions and individuals to interact on a regular everyday basis using several languages. Translanguaging, which has recently emerged as a concept, encourages the use of an individual's own language when they are interacting in another language which is used as a medium for content learning (García & Wei, 2014). Multilingual learners can use their own native language as this is directly linked with students' cultural background and personal experiences. Translanguaging has been used to convey multilingual, multicultural, and multimodal strategies and techniques in various contexts including in international HE (Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe, 2020). However, there is a scarcity of research on HE viewed from the lens of translanguaging English as a medium of instruction (EMI) (Paulsrud et al., 2021). First, the current language policy and classroom discourse practices in British HE are still dominated by the English language (Jenkins, 2017). Policy-makers, educators and learners promote the exclusive use of the English language discouraging students from bringing their languages and cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This fosters monotony, inequality, and exclusion taking into consideration the students' perspective. The current study is vital as it promotes an understanding of the association of languages with identity, power, and diversity. Second, the present study focused on the implementation of translanguaging in EMI classes in Management Education as in many universities in the UK, the English-only policy is strictly required in classes in various Business Schools which promote its sole use in academic settings and therefore urge students to leave their linguistic and cultural baggage aside (Fang, 2018). Consequently, it is important to examine how various stakeholders deal with the tension between the rigid English-only policy and the students' practical language, cultural and psychological needs as multilingual students in EMI HE classes.

2. Literature review

Several studies highlight the negative impact of the interference from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) as this promotes translation which impedes writing fluency (Alzahrani, 2019). This has led many educators to

discourage or even prohibit their learners from using their mother tongue, forcing them to "think in English". Nevertheless, other researchers highlight the importance of using L1 at the initial stages of generating ideas, brainstorming, planning, and organizing thoughts on a topic as well as understanding the instructions. This promotes "cognitive fluency" which refers to the subjective experience of the ease or difficulty of completing a mental task (Alhaward, 2018). Therefore, this study stems from previous research that claims that translanguaging is useful for advanced users in their second language. It focuses on examining the practices of tertiary level learners who speak English as their second language, their attitudes and usage of translanguaging and its influence on the quality of their writing.

While studying in the UK, students engage in various tasks which require them to use their mother tongue i.e., communicating with friends, explaining a term etc. Therefore, learners are often obliged to blend their native and target language to do a variety of tasks i.e., request information when they do not know specific words or phrases. However, in their everyday life as students in HE in the UK, learners are asked to use English only as a way of improving their command of the language, i.e., in interactive group work during the seminars. Therefore, the opportunity for students to use a variety of multilingual practices and form strategies to increase their academic achievement is lost. Although several studies in HE highlight the importance of students' multilingual competence which enhances academic performance (Marshall & Moore, 2013) since students use their linguistic repertoire as a resource to communicate and perform a variety of educational tasks, very few studies present an implementation framework that can encourage more lecturers in HE to implement multilingual and multicultural pedagogical tasks that can harness learners' multilingual practices (Pauwels, 2014). Most lecturers are challenged when they must address the need for a multilingual pedagogy which enhances students' self-regulation and increases their academic achievements. The use of different languages is required to allow students to communicate freely, make more sense of the tasks as well as the ideas involved and better understand their lecturers' expectations. Students often complain that they are unable to perform a certain task i.e., a written assignment, because they do not understand what they have to do or because they have not developed the right strategies, i.e., for editing their work effectively. In the current study, while students were encouraged to communicate while blending English with other languages, they were still asked to perform in the target language, that is English, in their final assignment aiming at fluency rather than accuracy.

The researcher used six pedagogical strategies which support the multi-lingual implementation framework used in terms of this study. First, all tasks the researcher used encouraged students to activate their linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2015) as they were asked to read information in the target language, e.g., English and discuss it in their own languages or even dialects, i.e., Welsh. The aim was to liberate learners from the discomfort of using one language to express their ideas. They were also encouraged to use translanguaging (Cenoz, 2017) as language mixing was promoted to help students understand the content and develop various writing strategies to achieve their learning goals. Moreover, learners were asked to compare their language with English and reflect on ways they could overcome language barriers and improve their performance. Intercultural encounters (Council of Europe, 2018) were also fostered to help students develop their intercultural awareness and realize the bias and prejudice they had in mind while interacting with students from various cultural backgrounds in HE. The researcher encouraged intercomprehension (Melo-Pfeifer, 2014), that is students were supported while they were trying to understand the target language, that is English, using information from the other languages they had mastered. This enabled them to communicate any ideas they had more successfully, overcome their fears of using English correctly and ultimately develop their fluency. Learners' multilingual and multicultural competence (Council of Europe, 2018) was also emphasized as students were guided to reflect on their ability to use their native language along with other languages while they strived to communicate with their peers. This allowed them to make better sense of the tasks and the language they were using to learn content.

The use of translanguaging allows writers to express their ideas clearly and communicate them to others fluently (García & Leiva, 2014). Learners are allowed to find common ground in their mother tongue and target language and make all the necessary connections which will improve their understanding and subsequently their academic performance. Students can thus develop both languages and improve their academic performance (Lust et al., 2016). Based on Cummins' (1979) Interdependence Theory, students' proficiency in L2 largely depends on their performance in L1 which indicates its connections with the translanguaging approach (García & Wei, 2014). Edelsky (1982), who explored Spanish-speaking children's writing in English, revealed that their knowledge in Spanish helped them in learning English as students wrote only in English despite using their Spanish sources (García & Wei, 2014). Those children used their own strategy, connecting what they knew in their home language to the target language, to produce a piece of writing.

Every year, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the UK welcome thousands of students from various countries who predominantly speak English as a second or foreign language. These learners often complain that they would have performed better in their exams and coursework if their lecturers had provided them with instructions for their tasks in their dominant language in addition to the target language (English). They frequently ask for permission to check the translation of the instructions in their assignments or to receive help and support from one of their peers who can speak or understand their native language. The multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment focuses on the presumption that multilingual learners may face incredible challenges when they are assessed through the English language which is their second or even third language. De Backer et al. (2016) and Menken and Shohamy (2015) also stress the challenges of assessing content using exams with instructions in the target language. Shohamy (2011) reports a study in which students who received multilingual instructions achieved better scores than those who received instructions in the dominant language. Antia (2021) argues that a monolingual exoglossic language regime for examinations in multilingual sub-Saharan Africa is an aberration as it fosters social inequalities. Inbar-Lourie and Donitsa-Schmidt (2020) explored 465 students' expectations regarding desired EMI lecturers' qualities in Israeli higher education institutions. The findings revealed that desired EMI lecturers should be highly proficient in English subject matter experts, able to simulate an international learning experience, display effective teaching pedagogies in both content and second language, and be familiar with the students' local language and culture highlighting the significance of lecturers' intercultural and multilingual awareness.

As the internationalization of HE worldwide has broadened student diversity in HEI in the last decade (De Wit, 2011), educators have to ensure equity and inclusion for all learners to enhance their personal, social and academic growth. In the past few years, inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment have become a priority through major policy, institutional and instructional changes (Wray, 2013). However, HEI have encountered multiple challenges i.e., lack of professional training (Forlin, 2012), educators' skills, attitude, and willingness (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002), inadequate support and resources (Wilde & Avramidis, 2011) and compromises to academic standards while practicing inclusivity (Hockings et al., 2008). In spite of these challenges, British HEI should try to respond to the needs of these learners, adopt inclusive practices and use adequate material to cater for their needs taking into consideration their diversity in terms of i.e., culture, and preferences (Santoro, 2009). To avoid non-traditional, i.e., dyslexic, students' disengagement (Plaut et al., 2009) and

harming equity agendas (Ford et al., 2020) and to enhance diverse students' involvement, systemic changes at the policy and practice level are needed to promote inclusive multilingual and multicultural education (May & Bridger, 2010). The philosophy of inclusive pedagogy is grounded in protecting human rights, fostering respect and equality, and providing equal opportunity for participation to all students irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, language, or physical ability (Kaur et al., 2015).

This chapter aims to explore whether the use of an inclusive multilingual approach to comprehension in content assessment which encourages translanguaging and the use of ELF can enhance students' writing performance, professional skills, and attitudes towards learning in HE. The chapter will address the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of multilingual tasks, in terms of which students use an inclusive multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment which fosters translanguaging and ELF, on students' academic writing achievement?
2. What are students' perceptions of the impact of multilingual tasks, in terms of which students use an inclusive multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment which fosters translanguaging and ELF, on their academic performance?

3. Methodology

The current exploratory mixed-methods intervention study used a quasi-experimental design. Its aim was to employ a new framework to implement multilingual tasks in the EMI Business school classroom (Figure 1) which utilized translanguaging and English as a Lingua Franca to promote an inclusive multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment.

3.1. Participants

The present study involved 100 students, aged 19–35, in using translanguaging, that is in using their native language (L1) along with the target language, English, in terms of carefully structured group activities for approximately 4 months (13 weeks in total) at London Metropolitan University. The participants formed 4 mixed-ability groups of local and international multilingual high-, medium- and low-achieving students (Table 1). The researcher examined the impact of multilingual tasks which aimed to facilitate comprehension in assessment on multilingual (either international or local) students' writing performance. Students attended an undergraduate module aiming to develop their personal

and professional academic skills focusing on how to write an academic essay. Students attended two 90-minute sessions per week. One of them was online due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the other one was face-to-face. Students had to write an essay by the end of the academic year. The lecturer asked students to provide anonymous feedback on the use of this new multilingual implementation framework, i.e., whether it helped them understand the instructions of the assignment, every 2–3 weeks using Mentimeter. They also conducted regular group discussions to identify any challenges that the students may be facing and provide the necessary support. Participation in the discussions and the provision of feedback was optional. The lecturer received research ethics approval from the University and informed written consent from the students to use their grades and feedback.

Table 1: Demographic details and characteristics of participating students

|	**Students**	**Frequency**
Gender	Male	48
	Female	52
Academic Performance	High-achieving students (over 70 %)	8
	Medium-achieving students (40–69 %)	40
	Low-achieving students (0–39 %)	52

3.2. Instruments and procedure

Students were divided randomly in two control (n = 50) and two experimental groups (n = 50) due to access limitations. All students had to write a pre-test which was a reflective essay on the same topic. Students in the experimental groups were then involved in weekly multilingual tasks in terms of which they were encouraged to discuss their ideas using their native language and the target language (English). Students in the control groups followed the same procedure using the same material but were restricted from using their L1 in the respective tasks. They only used their target language as is the norm in HEI in the UK. Students of similar linguistic backgrounds formed groups, discussed their ideas, and provided feedback to each other in terms of their assignment.

Tasks were learner-centred, fostering students' collaboration and translanguaging while the lecturer also supervised the whole process closely. Given the diversity which is inherent in most HEI classes in the UK, students, both international and local, can greatly benefit from differentiation which fosters cultural inclusiveness in an attempt to initiate change by introducing multilingual tasks.

These also foster the use of ELF, emphasizing that the focus is on fluency rather than accuracy. The aim of the tasks was to experiment with ways in which learners could fully understand what they had to do in terms of their assignments and to share strategies and ideas regarding how they could complete their tasks effectively. In terms of each one of their weekly sessions, students were encouraged to reflect on their past linguistic and cultural experiences activating learners' schemata and allowing them to assume an active role as agents of their own learning (Galante et al., 2019). For example, when students were asked to work on the topic of mental health, they had to discuss their own experiences based on their cultural background using translanguaging where necessary to enhance their fluency in the target language while comparing their mother tongue with English and creating bridges which would help them express themselves freely both in writing and orally. These activities fostered cross-linguistic analysis and awareness-raising of both linguistic and social aspects of language use. The aim was to allow students to draw on their linguistic repertoire as they tried to address various issues in terms of their assignment. The lecturer thus fostered the use of more linguistically and culturally inclusive practices rather than an English-only pedagogy. The descriptors of multilingual and multicultural competence which were included in the recently published Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2018) should also be taken into consideration as lecturers try to develop multilingual tasks which cater for the needs of their increasingly multilingual and multicultural classes.

The implementation design of each one of these multilingual tasks can be seen in Figure 1. Students were asked to discuss and prepare a presentation on a different topic for three out of the 12 weeks of their academic semester. They had to do some research on various topics related to social issues, i.e., the legalization of drugs and media effects on young people. Students discussed the topic and how they were expected to work in order to write an academic essay, wrote a short essay (up to 500 words) and provided peer feedback to each other as they were reflecting on the various topics in order to choose the one they would write their final assignment on. They were encouraged to discuss their challenges on a weekly basis using their first and second language or even a third one. However, they had to write their assignment in English.
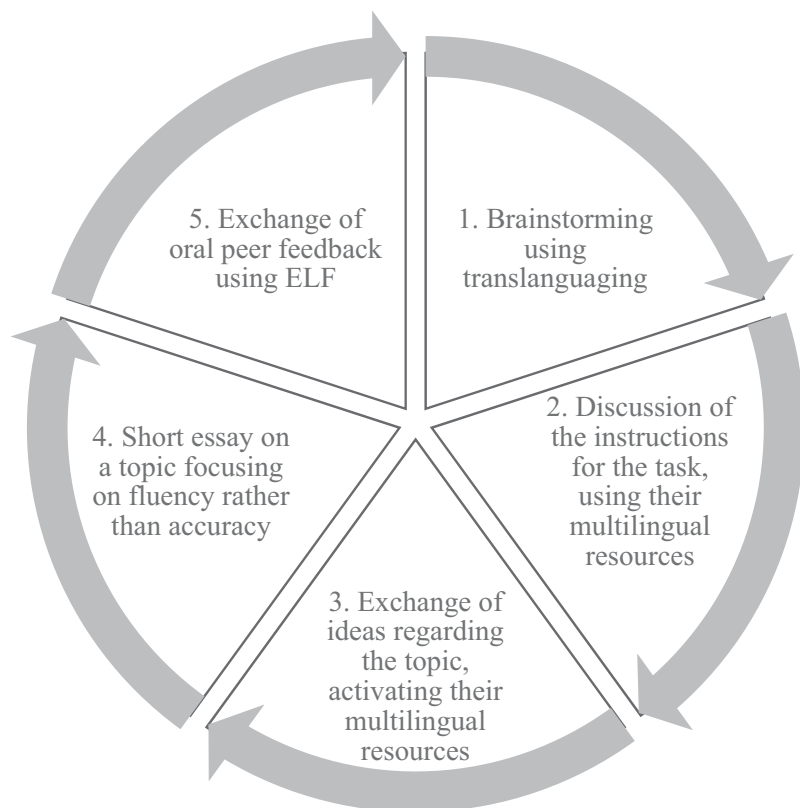
Figure 1: Multilingual implementation framework

3.3. Data instruments and analysis

In terms of exploring students' attitudes, data were collected from the lecturer's field notes from observations, students' semi-structured whole class discussions with their lecturer every three weeks and students' anonymous feedback through Mentimeter as students were asked to provide feedback regarding the process of the implementation every 2–3 weeks. The overall aim was to triangulate the data, identify and determine the themes, and establish the reliability of the data collected (Speyer et al., 2011).

Regarding student feedback, class discussions and the observation data, thematic analysis was used to analyse large blocks of text in the data. Data analysis included specifying the units of analysis, coding data, sorting codes, and

generating themes (Terry et al., 2017). To validate the findings, perspectives from students were further compared and contrasted with the lecturer's field notes. There was a second coder and intercoder reliability was established by comparing codes on 10 % of the data. Intercoder agreement was 96 %, which showed that coding was reliable in the current study (MacPhail et al., 2016). Therefore, the data eventually generated the knowledge from multiple perspectives and the researcher triangulated the findings so as to vividly portray students' development of writing skills. The lecturer marked all students' assignments, taking into consideration the same marking scheme which was prescribed and approved by the University.

The goal was to introduce learners to participating in multilingual tasks with the aim of enhancing their writing skills in English and overall academic performance. The two assignment topics of the current module were discussed in the face-to-face setting and online, and based on their discussions, the participants were asked to write an assignment (essay) of about 1,000 words at the end of the term. All these data were utilized to answer all research questions. Students were also encouraged to use an online forum to post any questions and interact with each other in terms of the current module.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Impact of multilingual tasks on undergraduate students' writing performance in English

The current study explored the impact of multilingual tasks which aimed to enhance students' comprehension in assessment on students' writing performance by comparing students post- versus pre-tests. Students had to write a reflective essay before and at the end of the implementation. The researcher scored all essays and a second assessor (experienced lecturer) blindly scored 20 % of all pre- and post-test essays using the same marking rubric after receiving rater training by the researcher. The interrater agreement was 92 % and any disagreements were discussed and resolved between the raters (Gingerich et al., 2017). The module leader provided the assessment rubric in terms of which lecturers had to provide a score (%). Students' essays marking criteria included organization, ideas/content, mechanics, application of theory, referencing. Findings regarding students' pre-test and post-test writing performance can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' writing performance pre- and post-test scores

		M	SD
Experimental groups	Pre-test	36.46	19.7
	Post-test	61.06	9.67
Control groups	Pre-test	35.06	21.78
	Post-test	41.16	17.34

A paired t-test was conducted to explore the progress of the experimental groups. This showed that there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test (M = 36.46, SD = 19.7, n = 50) and post-test (M = 61.06, SD = 9.67, n = 50) on writing performance (t (49) = 13.01, p < .05) (Cohen's d: 1.58). A similar test was performed for the control groups, and it showed that the difference between students' pre-test (M = 35.06, SD = 21.78, n = 50) and post-test (M = 41.16, SD = 17.34, n = 50) was not statistically significant (t (49) = 5.16, p < .05) (Cohen's d: 0.3). Cohen's effect size value (d = 1.58) suggested a "large" effect size and high practical significance for the experimental groups and a rather "small" effect size (d = 0.3) for the control groups.

An independent samples t-test was performed which indicated that students who were involved in the multilingual tasks scored higher than students who used only English during their sessions and that this difference in performance was statistically significant t (99) = 37.93, p < 0.001 (Table 2). Then, a Levene's test was performed, and the p value was p < 0.001 which indicated a violation of the assumption that the variance is equal across the control and experimental groups and showed that the difference between the variances was statistically significant. This also confirmed Nimmrichter and Hornberger's claim (2013) that the use of L1 is crucial for second language learners, who often face challenges while trying to understand content. Multilingual students in the experimental groups in the current study were able to improve their writing performance as they were allowed to clarify the instructions of the assignment and exchange information about content and strategies they could use to improve their writing performance in terms of the assignment they had to write for their module.

4.2. Perceived benefits of using multilingual tasks on students' writing skills

The current study indicated that students appreciated the fact that they could use their L1 as a last resort when they were unable to express their ideas in English. They felt relieved because they did not have to translate everything into English

and they enjoyed this opportunity of exchanging linguistic and cultural experiences. They were able to understand the requirement of the assignment and discuss potential strategies to overcome their challenges, i.e., editing/proofreading their work, as one student reports:

> I love the fact that I can use my mother tongue and exchange ideas with people who speak my language and realise my challenges. I also try to understand other people and help them based on my experiences as a learner. We exchange simple strategies, i.e., read your work taking one aspect of writing into consideration at a time (e.g., punctuation). This was quite helpful as an idea as I cannot correct all my errors with one go. I have to go over my work several times to really improve it.

Students also welcomed the acceptance of their cultural background and of the "baggage" they brought as learners from a non-British context. They were thus able to compare strategies and techniques, refine their existing ones and devise new to address several issues in both their mother tongue and target language harnessing the benefits of a diverse group of people who are studying at a HE institution in the UK, as a student observes:

> I love studying in the UK. I believe this is a life-changing experience for me, but I am also proud of my own linguistic and cultural background. I learnt a lot and I am using my experience in English. I am also helping some of my multilingual peers. Everybody needs insights into ways in which other people deal with challenges they encounter as they try to improve their writing skills. We can always support each other and learn from each other.

To sum up, the lecturer also highlighted the importance of students using all linguistic resources they had got to improve their writing performance as, according to previous research, the exclusive focus on one language from the students' linguistic repertoires discloses only one aspect and "produces a distorted picture" (Sanchez et al., 2013, p. 160). The current study proposes a holistic view of multilingualism, as the development of writing skills in various languages is interrelated rather than independent and students draw on all their linguistic resources to develop their writing skills (Soltero-González et al., 2012).

4.3. Perceived challenges of using multilingual tasks on students' writing skills

Students also identified a few challenges regarding the use of multilingual tasks as some learners seemed unwilling to participate actively in them and help their peers. Their previous educators had always insisted on them using only the English language even if communication was difficult for them at some point, as a student states:

> It is a bit awkward. All my life my teachers used to tell me that I should use English only. This is the only way I could improve my performance in English. Now, things have changed. I am not sure this is going to help me. It seems to facilitate communication, but will it help me improve my writing skills in the long run?

Some other students also thought that this would interfere with their writing and felt rather confused. It seemed to them like taking a step back -as they would not focus on the use of the target language – as it would not improve their academic performance. Moreover, some students were unwilling to share personal information and communicate with their peers openly due to their cultural background. They believed lecturers should be extremely careful when putting students into groups, as a student stresses below:

> I want to develop my writing skills, but I am not sure this is the right way to achieve my goal. Some people seem very reserved and are unwilling to share things. I cannot be the only one helping others. They have to help me and provide useful suggestions as well. I believe I should join another group. Maybe things will work better with other students. Maybe it is personal…

Educators should be very careful when using multilingual tasks and supervise the whole procedure very closely. This is a new ground and caution is needed when inviting inexperienced and frequently biased learners to use their L1 when interacting with their peers. Decades of fixation on using the target language and avoiding the use of the mother tongue cannot be erased overnight. It takes training, collaboration among learners and the lecturer, and open and frequent communication to overcome any challenges. Students' voices should be heard, and accommodation be made to ensure that all learners can benefit from multilingual tasks which allow learners to connect past knowledge to their current learning and improve their performance in various languages (Usanova & Schnoor, 2021). The implementation process should also be carefully designed and adapted each time it meets resistance to cater for all learners' needs, tastes, and learning styles.

5. Implications

There are a number of implications for lecturers when using a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment to enhance students' writing skills. First, educators should train students to work independently and reward them for their efforts. They should also devote time to explain to students why it is important to be become involved in multilingual tasks and how this can help them later as they will be looking for a job. Lecturers should allow students to work on a variety of topics to avoid repetition and engage all learners. They need

to provide good and bad samples of multilingual tasks, meaningful feedback, and clear suggestions for improvement.

There are implications for researchers who wish to explore the use of ELF and translanguaging in terms of a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment even further. The current study has several limitations as it explored the use of multilingual tasks with a small number of students in a specific context for only one semester. Future research should be more thorough and examine the use of multilingual tasks at a large scale in undergraduate and even postgraduate education for a longer time frame and possibly exploring its impact on other skills, i.e., reading, or oral skills. There are also implications for universities as they should provide professional development courses to train their staff in using this approach combined with ELF and translanguaging. This will enable them to help students take responsibility for their own learning and develop a variety of skills necessary in the current highly competitive diverse world.

There are implications for learners who should be less timid and willing to engage in multilingual tasks challenging their past experience. They should be ready to embrace the challenges of working in multilingual teams in which all members contribute and help each other as they try to achieve their final goals. Another suggestion for improvement would be to try to increase the ways in which students engage in multilingual collaboration by designing more group activities. Lecturers can also foster ongoing interaction by using additional resources i.e., a group on Facebook, Instagram or X (formerly Twitter). This would enable more people to get involved in various discussions around topics, share useful strategies and contribute their ideas and experiences. In the long term, these exchanges of ideas could help students enrich their multilingual communication and expand their network.

Moreover, the implementation of multilingual tasks should be more structured –at least at the beginning – so that students could easily understand the rules and follow them. To address ethical issues, there should be frequent supervision of the procedure and open communication as well as severe penalties for academic offenders (i.e., plagiarism). Multilingual tasks allow students to have a voice and express their feelings, ideas, and concerns, share useful linguistic strategies, and reflect on their mistakes enhancing students' overall experience.

To sum up, the aim of this study was to explore undergraduate learners' perceptions of multilingual tasks when used to facilitate comprehension in assessment with the aim of improving their writing performance. Understanding their perspectives can lead to improvements in the implementation of multilingual tasks, further the University program's mission, and ultimately benefit all stakeholders. Our findings point to the role of a multilingual approach towards

comprehension in assessment as a facilitator to the development of writing skills and highlights the possibility of generating additional resources not only for writing skill development but also for learning in general. Our findings stress the need for fostering multilingual tasks in terms of language policies as well as integrating them into learning organizations, contents, and methods of teaching (Gogolin, 2018). Teaching and interacting in one of the languages may drive the development of writing skills in all languages in a multilingual repertoire improving students' writing skills (Schwarzer et al., 2003).

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The current study explored the use of multilingual tasks as a means of facilitating comprehension in assessment and improving undergraduate students' writing performance. The writers' development and growth were discernible in their final assignments and their feedback. However, lecturers should help their students develop a deeper understanding of what it is expected from them when they engage in multilingual tasks, enhance their critical thinking and assessment skills, and challenge their existing beliefs. Students should be encouraged to contribute in terms of interactive activities, negotiate meaning and form, identify problems and suggest solutions, provide suggestions for improvement of multilingual tasks, exchange points of view in a civilized and constructive way, and share ideas which will help them grow as multilingual writers.

Using multilingual tasks which promote translanguaging and ELF in terms of a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment has strengthened these learners' intercultural and multilingual awareness and helped them gradually improve their writing skills in so many ways, i.e., by increasing their understanding of ways in which they can improve their writing efficacy, enhancing their cross-linguistic abilities, improving their so called "soft skills", i.e., negotiation and collaboration, and managing to move from a fixed to a growth mindset.

This study is significant and will have an impact on multilingual students in HEI as incorporating multilingual tasks in their programs and acknowledging or even celebrating their multilingual identities is the only way forward if we want our graduates to harness the benefits of diversity and foster equity and inclusion in their workplace. Implementing multilingual tasks will also help lecturers enhance their students' skills and gradually guide them in detecting their weaknesses and improving their academic performance by engaging in critical reflection of their own work and that of others, taking into consideration their linguistic and cultural background. Currently, the benefits and challenges of developing multilingual tasks from the student perspective have been largely

ignored (Cummins et al., 2015). Educators need to understand what aspects of multilingual tasks promote learning (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016) and facilitate comprehension of the assessment tasks. Therefore, more research i.e., into students' multilingual strategies, and educational projects that utilize a multilingual approach towards comprehension in assessment as a learning tool are needed to help practitioners have a clearer picture of its benefits in the long run as an innovative approach that promotes inclusive learning.

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